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The Ingersoll Lecture, 1929

MAN'S CONSCIOUSNESS OF IMMORTALITY

BY

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THE INGERSOLL LECTURESHIP

Extract from the will of Miss Caroline Haskell Ingersoll, who died in Keene, County of Cheshire, New Hampshire, Jan. 26, 1883

First. In carrying out the wishes of my late beloved father, George Goldthwait Ingersoll, as declared by him in his last will and testament, I give and bequeath to Harvard University in Cambridge, Mass., where my late father was graduated, and which he always held in love and honor, the sum of Five thousand dollars ($5,000) as a fund for the establishment of a Lectureship on a plan somewhat similar to that of the Dudleian lecture, that is — one lecture to be delivered each year, on any convenient day between the last day of May and the first day of December, on this subject, "the Immortality of Man," said lecture not to form a part of the usual college course, nor to be delivered by any Professor or Tutor as part of his usual routine of instruction, though any such Professor or Tutor may be appointed to such service. The choice of said lecturer is not to be limited to any one religious denomination, nor to any one profession, but may be that of either clergyman or layman, the appointment to take place at least six months before the delivery of said lecture. . . . The same lecture to be named and known as "the Ingersoll lecture on the Immortality of Man."

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MAN'S CONSCIOUSNESS OF IMMORTALITY

Introduction

The Fundamental Thesis

AS a subject of discussion, the immortality of man has attracted not only the consideration of nearly all the great minds of history, but the passionate personal interest of the vast majority of the human family. Probably no other inquiry has been so persistent or so nearly universal as this. The learned and the unlearned, the religious and the irreligious, are all alike in feeling the urgent nature of this question and the far-reaching influence of the answer which is made to it.

The arguments in support of the belief in a future life which have appeared in the history of thought may be grouped

under five main divisions. First, we have those which are based upon theories concerning the indestructible nature of the soul; second, those which arise from doctrines as to man's religious nature; third, those which are derived from an exposition and defence of the supposedly absolute values of man's ethical nature; fourth, those which assert that discarnate spirits have made themselves known in various ways to men and women who still live in the body; fifth, those which claim that because men have always and everywhere believed in a future life such a belief is by that very fact justified.

In the present discussion I propose not to attempt any of these direct proofs of immortality, but to examine the place which the idea of immortality or belief in survival has occupied in the actual life of mankind. This will involve some statement regarding the various phases of thought named above, which have taken

shape in the classic attempts to prove immortality or to give reasonable grounds for the maintenance of that faith. But they will not be used for their traditional purpose.

The Fundamental Thesis of this discussion may be stated thus: The idea of immortality, the belief in personal survival, has entered as an inherent, essential, ineradicable element into every phase of human experience from the beginning; it has contributed certain qualities to the entire reflective life of man, without which that life, as we know it, would have been impossible.

If this Thesis be true, it follows that the disappearance of this notion or belief would result in the radical transformation (let us say) of the life of man upon the surface of this planet. Nothing less than this is the issue before us here and now. Our aim, let me repeat, is not to prove that the belief is true; but this,

— to describe and illustrate the place which the notion of immortality has occupied as an inherent and essential factor in each and all of the successive main aspects of human experience. If this can be done successfully, we may not have "proved immortality" in the common acceptation of that phrase, but we shall have established the claim implied in the title of this lecture, that humanity has made its history in and through the consciousness of immortality. I propose to do this by the abrupt statement and the brief illustration of five successive Facts, as I venture to call them.

I

The First Fact

The belief in personal immortality is found to have been universal in human history, which would seem to imply that it arose spontaneously and inevitably from the very structure and operation of the human mind.

We must reckon as among the most interesting of the so-called "proofs" of the existence of God, if not at first sight the most convincing, that known as the argument *e consensu gentium*, i. e., the unanimous conviction of the race. And indeed the sheer universality of belief in an invisible, súperhuman "controller of destiny" is very impressive. The same statement may be made in reference to the problem of immortality. For it seems to be a fact that from earliest times human beings have always believed that there is a realm of life into which the dying pass. We can find no

period or region of human history where funeral and other rites do not bear witness to the presence and the vital import of this conviction. This too is a very impressive element in the course of the universal experience of mankind.

The Fact before us is not invalidated by the statements of many thoughtful people that they do not believe in a future life, or even wish for it, nor by the attitudes of large numbers everywhere whose individual lives do not seem to be influenced by the expectation of their own survival of death. We must remind ourselves that there are also many who live apparently without any sense of the beautiful or any adherence to the principle of duty. Yet these two are among the supreme values of human existence, and are not invalidated by the indifference or the ignominy of certain members of the race. Moreover, as soon as philosophic inquiry arose, many appeared

who denied other universal and essential convictions of mankind. Even the whole world has been seriously treated by many individuals as illusion. Systems of thought and of religious life have been built on that hypothesis. Men have included their own existence as part of the mad dream of reality, which dream is itself an inscrutable illusion.

Taking the racial history as a whole and allowing for such exceptions as we have just considered, it would seem that faith in a future life is a normal function of the human mind.

That is what the argument *e consensu gentium* really means. This universal conviction is not a mere superficial vote wherein we count majorities and minorities. It seems to inhere in the processes of the human mind, to be inevitable whether it be true or not, to have ruled human experience persistently and completely whether the notion be a usurper

and tyrant, or vicegerent of God Himself.

Attempts have been made to discredit this great First Fact in various ways, of which two may be named here. The first of these proceeds by laying emphasis upon the dimness and crudeness of the forms in which the notion of immortality first took its place in man's history. In early times people either believed that the souls of men descended at death into a vague, shadowy underworld, where passion and force and reality are not to be found or pictured; or, they believed that for a time at least the spirits of the departed haunted their former abodes and wrought for good or ill upon the lives of their former relatives and neighbors. In most regions we find that these two views were held at the same time by the same people, as Homer and the Old Testament abundantly prove. It is this apparent unworthiness of these early views

of the future life that has been taken, by the less thoughtful, as destroying the supposed value and truth of the belief itself.

The second method has been to give explanations of the rise of this belief on psychological grounds. These include two universal factors in human experience. It may be admitted that the phenomena of dreams had much to do with the rise of belief in the survival of death. When a "primitive" man awoke from a vivid dream, he found it hard to believe that the events of the dream had not actually occurred. He assumed that his "spirit" had carried him away on a journey, or engaged in a fight, or chased some animal in the hunt. When his dream was of a dead relative, it was natural to suppose that the discarnate spirit had met with his in some other realm of being. Thus the idea of a life apart from the body and even beyond death took its

place in the minds of early men. But this natural yet crude assumption of survival was powerfully reinforced in the emotional life by the grief of the bereaved. Love caught at any and every reason for the desperate assertion that the beloved whose body had ceased to breathe could not have ceased to exist. Love would not let them go. Thus, then, from these two main roots of dreams and grief arose all the other beliefs and religious practices, such as ancestor-worship, which are associated with the idea of a future life. If, the argument proceeds, the belief in immortality was actually produced from such sources, — mere dreams and natural grief, — it stands discredited. Its universality, far from confirming it, only bears humiliating testimony to the universally foolish, impulsive, and irrational credulity of mankind.

But, let me contend with as much

force as possible, this method of disproving immortality, by merely depreciating some of the psychological conditions amid which the idea broke upon the reflective life of human beings, ought never to have satisfied any thoroughgoing philosophical evolutionist. What the modern philosopher, with his eyes upon the whole course of events from atoms and molecules to mankind, has to face is the very presence in our world, the evolutional arrival on the surface of our little planet, of a being who can even conceive of as well as wish for and believe in his own immortality, for whom the indefinite continuity of personal existence seems to be a necessary assumption, an inherent element in the whole drama and process of intelligent life itself. If bereavement and dreams awakened in earliest mothers of men the sudden idea and the undying passion for a future life, however dim and crude were

the first pictures of it, the supreme fact is that evolution, Nature, God, call the ultimate source what you will, has produced a mind that is fitted to conceive that idea. The conception is there. It has contributed with immeasurable power to the actual history of the race. It has entered, as we shall see, into the reflective life of man and has pervaded every phase of his experience with certain qualities which are its own direct fruits.

In fact, the idea of immortality is so universal, so persistent, so penetrating, that it looks as if it were an essential feature of the evolving mind of man.

When we consider the efforts that have been made to identify the conditions under which the notion of a future life was first formed, we must be struck by the fact that they do not include as a necessary starting-point the wish of the individual that he may live on after the

death of the body. If it was from dreams that living men first got the notion, then it was a conviction that *others* still lived whom they had seen dead before them. If it was from love and grief that the notion arose as a demand, then it was again the survival of *others* that was first conceived of. If it was in connection with animistic views of the forces of nature or if it was through the belief in demons, gods, or God that the idea of another realm into which human beings might pass was first cherished, in such case again the interest of the individual was secondary to and resultant from that objective view of the range of personal existences.

However all that may be, it is unquestionable that when this notion did arrive it took its place at once and most powerfully in the self-conscious life of the individual man. It became related to his fundamental instincts or impulses,

and at once it opened up for him a view of the universe of reality and the range of human relationship, responsibility, and action which grew into his whole world of moral and spiritual values. Let us inquire briefly into some of these connections between the notion of survival and the already present constituents of human nature.

II

The Second Fact

The belief in personal immortality was harmoniously and organically related from the first to all the fundamental elements of self-conscious mind, which is characteristic of the human race.

We must assume here without exposition or argument that the reflective life of man is characterized by or based upon an indefinite number of ultimate principles. Whether we call them categories of the understanding or pragmatic postulates does not concern us now. Nor does

it affect our argument that there are differences of theory as to the psychological conditions and processes amid which these principles came to be identified, and differences also among the efforts which have been made to define them for their more effective use, or to defend their authority when that was questioned by theorizing sceptics. The fact is that so far back as we can go in history the reflective mind of man has seen and felt the ultimate nature of such facts or postulates as Causality, Duty, Responsibility, the Uniformity of Nature, and others. Some would put the matter otherwise and maintain that the mind of man has proceeded through the ages towards ideals of truth, beauty, holiness, goodness, and love, by assuming that in some sense they are realities, i. e., values having objective place in the universe of actual existences. To this we must refer again in our discussion.

Now it is in this reflective life of man that the notion of and belief in immortality has taken its place. From the nature of the case it has been more frequently doubted or denied than others of these fundamental elements in the "stuff" of mental life. But this notion has from the dawn of history wrought as powerfully, as deeply, as any of those which we have named.

Moreover, this notion has entered harmoniously into the coöperative exercise of all these other functions of reflective mind. It is no mere addendum, whose extrusion would leave the others to operate effectively in their own right. They are also dependent upon it. It is so essentially rooted in the very life of the human self, that the whole process of the intelligent life of man would be radically altered if this idea or element of consciousness were finally destroyed.

In this section of my discussion I must

defend these statements by limiting myself to three illustrations:

1. In the first place, the notion of the personal survival of death became from the first bound up with, and harmoniously lived at the heart of, the deep instinct which we may call the instinct of self-preservation or the will to live. Professor J. B. Pratt calls it "that inherent demand for conscious life as such." He says this "is based upon an instinct — if, indeed, it be not ultimately based on something deeper still." [1] And Professor Hocking has it that "the will to live, for a being with a mind, must always mean the will to be mentally alive as well as to be physically metabolizing." And again, "If it is not merely the contents of experience that are valuable, but the process of experiencing, it is clear that so far as a being is self-conscious he will

1. *The Religious Consciousness*, p. 237.

have a 'will to live' or an 'instinct of self-preservation.'" [1]

Now this must mean that somehow the notion of survival is actually one with the whole exercise of a reflective, self-conscious being. It was not a foreign intrusion upon a life already complete in all its functions without it. Nor was it a dim apparition on the far horizons of a daring imagination. It was at home in the mind of man, it was accepted as among the obvious facts with which the whole round of individual and social conduct must take account. Right into every other belief and all the varied activities of human life it penetrated with its own qualities. The energy of intelligent life was at one with the energy of this conviction.

It follows from this coalescence of the notion of immortality with the very consciousness of intelligent self-directing

1. *Human Nature and its Remaking*, p. 66.

life that when the process of abstract thought seemed to contradict it desolation fell upon the hearts of men. Various writers have described certain periods of culture when the loss of a spiritual faith, which always included the resolute denial of this sublime belief, brought gloom and despair upon more or less extensive groups of men.

This deep innate affirmation of the continuance of conscious life had its own place of influence in man's contemplation of his relations with nature. He could not escape the contrast between the apparent evanescence and futility of the individual life in comparison with the domineering permanence of the outer world. The eternal hills, the unchanging skies, daunted and confused, though they could not crush, this claim, this inherent will to live. Hence men took refuge in the superior permanence of the visible humanity, of the tribe, of the

nation, and finally of the world-wide empire. While still holding fast to the original claim of the individual consciousness and its forecast of survival, the other world seemed so dim and its conditions so unknown that satisfaction of the hunger for human permanence, the escape from the thraldom of death, was found for a time in the fact that the organized group of living persons, large or small, persists through generation after generation of vanishing individuals. This comparison of the invisible and indefinite and unsatisfying destiny of all human beings beyond death with the visible and graspable values of earthly organizations to the advantage of the latter, was one of the most potent of all the vast and varied processes of the reflective life of man. Eschatology and history have always been and always will be interwoven in the history of the race, and eschatology, even that of a

Huxley, is born of the undying consciousness of immortality.

Perhaps the most impressive discussion of the point before us in recent literature is the chapter on "The Age of Death" in Julia Wedgwood's learned and deep-delving book, entitled *The Moral Ideal, A Historic Study*. From that chapter let me quote the following sentences. The eminent authoress is discussing the collapse of faith in the permanence of the Roman Empire and the repercussion of that despair upon the whole prospect of life. In comparison with those, the days of Marcus Aurelius the Emperor and Epictetus the slave, "death seems never to have been feared so much, or so little. . . . It is but another way of saying that Death had obtained a new hold on men's minds to add that the problem of a life beyond Death had begun to take new significance. It is easy not to think of Death, but who can

think of Death and not ask whether it be the end of desire and fear, or a great crisis in the development of all desires and fears?" [1]

The idea of a future life has thus from the beginning worked in with the inherent instinct of self-preservation, the inherent claim of self-consciousness to persist in being, the inherent power of the will to live. Evolution has produced this being who can in advance contemplate death and defy it. The consideration of his weakness has become the occasion for manifestation of his power. What might have been a fatal despair, this fear of death, has become the birth pang of his hope. Out of the universe of brute fact he arose to conceive of his own individual permanence. In conceiving it

1. *The Moral Ideal*, p. 206. See also Benjamin Kidd, *The Principle of Western Civilisation*, and L. P. Jacks, *The Faith of a Worker*, for further illustrations of the influence exercised by the fact of anticipated death upon human experience.

he has already willed his immortality. The raising of the question has implied the affirmative answer, as if the human spirit had uttered its deepest nature when it said, Because I can even think of the life beyond death, therefore I have it.

2. These words have brought us to our second illustration of the deep and intrinsic place which the notion of immortality has taken in the reflective life of man. It is already implied in the fact, just described, that the consciousness of man by its very nature demands permanence for itself. The very idea of permanence rises out of that element of rational life which we may call prevision, and which has its place in the sub-human forms of intelligence. Lloyd Morgan finds this to be a "turning-point in the mind-story," *viz.*, "the dawn of expectancy with prospective reference

to coming events." [1] That power of prevision which is limited in sub-rational conscious life becomes in man one of the predominant factors of all advance. "One must remember," says Lloyd Morgan, "in how large a measure all rational procedure is dominated by anticipation of the future." Who can measure the vast influence on the life of man of this constant, deliberate, believing, calculating anticipation of the future? The first planting of seed, the first domestication of animals, the first expectation of the full moon, the first laying aside of firewood for an approaching winter in the cave, these and a myriad other transactions of man characterize the emergence in evolution of the mind

1. *Life, Mind, and Spirit*, p. 127. This should be compared with Spinoza's famous saying that "it is of the nature of Reason [i. e., what Lloyd Morgan calls "the reflective mind"] to see things in the light of the eternal (*sub quadam aeternitatis specie*)." — *Ethics*, Pt. II, Prop. 44, Corol. 2.

which is inherently able and is irresistibly urged to seek personal welfare through an ever-widening knowledge of the outer world and its values.

It is this reflective capacity which alone can map out a consciously chosen plan of action, using memories of the past and a survey of present facts and personal desires as materials for a picture of that which shall be done. And that picture of future personal action, with some at least of the relations involved, must take its place in whatever wider picture of the objective universe of things and events the individual at his own stage of culture is capable of conceiving.

It is evident that in the evolution of the reflective mind death must have appeared as the supreme instance of what Professor Dewey would call "a difficulty." The very fact that a being has arrived on our planet who in advance

can conceive of death as demanding a place in each man's guidance of his own life, marks a stage of the utmost significance in the story of evolution. When survival was suggested as a solution of the difficulty, it was apparently accepted at once as a natural and obvious way out of the embarrassing situation in which the perplexed mind found itself. It was indeed *the only way out* unless the power of planning the future was to be rigidly confined within conditions of physical existence. To urge against the validity of this acceptance that it merely fell in with the interests of the individual man is to ignore the obvious fact that in the unfolding of rational life this was the exact situation to be expected. The interests of man are the substance and centre of human evolution. Accordingly, to feel and to see ever more clearly the interests of the individual which are invaded by the inevitable approach of

death is the necessary condition for conceiving, appreciating, and using the future life as the supreme fact in the total scheme of human prevision. And the wish for personal survival when conditioned by the wish for the survival of others, as we have seen it to be, is not an ignoble and contemptible thing but a characteristic sign of the grandeur of man.

From the first that idea, that man must survive death, exercised an immeasurable influence upon the entire history of the race. Through ancestor-worship it moulded conduct, giving firmness to standards of morality, attracting and guiding thought concerning the meaning of life as a whole. It stimulated the imagination by setting the individual into a vast drama of existence. Even in that age when, as some maintain, Greek and Roman culture was based or tried to base its ideals and sanc-

tions upon the earthly and temporal claims of the city and the empire, the general consciousness still dealt with the mystery of the Beyond. Greek Tragedy was born of this prevision, and, undaunted by philosophic scepticism, called upon men to face the harrowing problems of this life as in the presence of unseen powers. Ignore the belief in personal immortality which was cherished by the Greek consciousness, and its philosophy, its tragic poetry, as well as its religious ritual are simply unintelligible, as useless ruins as its temples are to-day.

3. A third illustration of the intimate relation of this belief to the processes of reflective mind may be found in the fact of sorrow. By sorrow we must understand an emotional state quite other than that of pain, as joy is far other than mere pleasure. It is not present in the sub-rational life, but is awakened only

in the reflective mind, the mind which can "look before and after, and pine for what is not." By general consent the word is mainly used of our experience of bereavement, and strangely enough it arose, and could in my view arise, only after human beings had conceived of the future life. This I must simply state without attempting to argue the matter at length.

What we face here again is the fact that the same vast creative process which produced the consciousness that wills to live forever, that regulates its life with an endless future in view, did in this vale of tears produce also, and in this very context, this high and holy thing which we call sorrow, the beautiful companion of the consciousness of immortality. Some of the greatest minds have looked into the heart of her and seen there a mystery which is more than the blind, pathetic, short-lived pang of a

bird or a lower mammal at the loss of their young, a mystery which is more poignant as human bereavement is vaster than that of the lower forms of life, a pain which becomes more keen as men are advanced in the moral refinements of the truly reflective life. Does not the great literature of the world contain much of the noblest in thought and thrilling word which had its birth in this grief of great hearts? Even Christianity, which brought life and immortality to light, led its own to deal most deeply and tenderly with the dark and never-ceasing fact of bereavement. It was Saint Augustine who explored so thoroughly his own grief at the death of the young man with whom he had seemed to live "as if one soul inhabited two bodies." It was Tennyson, victorious wrestler with doubt, believer in evolution before Spencer and Darwin, who explored his own great sorrow at the death of Arthur

Hallam. "O Sorrow, wilt thou live with me?" he sang, echoing Saint Augustine's dismayed questions about the strange sweetness of tears, and then exclaimed as if appalled at the most dismal fact of all, "O last regret, regret can die." Did a mere impersonal and mechanical evolution produce this mind, which can regret that regret should die? But some kind of evolution *did* produce it.

III

The Third Fact

The belief that human nature survives the event of physical death is inherent in man's attitude of superiority or lordship over the physical world, which has produced all science and all civilization.

Long before the birth of any real science, except perhaps astronomy and geometry, an ancient poet sang of man's relation to nature: "Jehovah hath put all things under his feet," the same Jehovah

who had set His own "glory above the heavens." The Hebrew psalmist there described as an act of God the perennial attitude and experience of man as the user of nature for his own ends. And indeed the conscious intelligence of man has always been dealing with both the physical and the animate worlds as if there were no limits to his absolute right to explore and to exploit them. Naturally that attitude was at first manifested in relatively simple, naïve, and clumsy ways. The knowledge of the objective world, which to-day is so vast as to surpass the compass of any individual mind, began in earliest times with the simplest use of separate objects in nature for the purpose of self-preservation and the satisfaction of the primal desires of man. The will to live and the power of prevision and indeed all the inherent qualities of mental action were employed from the beginning to create the simplest

weapons and tools needed for his safety and comfort out of the original materials of the physical world. The same instincts and powers which fashioned a spear and erected a hut have produced the airplane and the cathedral.

Within the last twenty years two movements of thought have arisen in the world of science which seem to presage an entire reconstruction of the prevalent view of the universe. Professor Whitehead has described "the recent breakdown of the seventeenth-century settlement of the principles of physical science";[1] and many contemporary works on the philosophy of science, as well as the rapid and bewildering devel-

1. *Science and the Modern World*, p. 270. Cf. the frank statement of Professor A. S. Eddington: "We have turned a corner in the path of progress and our ignorance stands revealed before us, appalling and insistent. There is something radically wrong with the present fundamental conceptions of physics and we do not see how to set it right." — *The Nature of the Physical World*, p. 179.

opment of mathematical physics, bear witness to the swift and startling revolution which is proceeding before our very eyes. Nearly two generations have been living, so far as popular philosophy and science were concerned, in prison. A mechanistic view of the evolution of the universe was applied even to the highest realms of human life. It was assumed that the earlier events of history were the direct and complete causes of the later events, that the lower forms of existence were the actual producers of the higher. These assumptions were applied with ruthless consistency to all ages, phases, and contents not only of the physical world but even of human experience. They invaded all fields of research in the general history of civilization, in the history of religion and ethics, in the origins of Christianity, including, of course, the life and person of Jesus Christ. No doubt the relentless pursuit

of truth under these assumptions has not been without some results of value. But it is a baseless theory that no progress can henceforth be made if another fundamental viewpoint is taken. And indeed progress is being made now, from day to day, in the deliberate conviction that the prison of naturalism must be broken down. The doctrine of emergent evolution, the multiform revelations which are associated with the amazing progress of physics, are combining to set the mind of man, the authority of reason, once more on its ancient throne in the consciousness of man. Again let it be said that the personal being who can lay bare the secrets of the physical universe and manipulate them for his own ends cannot brook the self-contradictory notion that his existence depends on that universe and that the dissolution of his bodily frame necessitates the abolition of himself. Rather is it the case, as Pro-

fessor Sorley has put it, that "history in the widest sense may be looked upon as the gradual process of the spiritualisation of matter; we shall see in it the successive steps by which mind gains the lead and things become contributory to values." [1]

The second new phase of science is that which deals with what are called the supranormal powers of the mind. It is the deliberate opinion of so learned a man of science as Charles Richet,[2] the eminent professor of physiology in the University of Paris, that the phenomena of telepathy, clairvoyance, premonition, even of levitation and the movement of objects without muscular contact, are too numerous, too widespread in history

1. *Moral Values and the Idea of God*, p. 124. Cf. also the general standpoint of Professor J. Y. Simpson's two valuable discussions: *The Spiritual Interpretation of Nature* and *Man and the Attainment of Immortality* (especially chap. 11).

2. *Traité de Métaphysique*, 2d ed. (1923).

and over the surface of the earth, to be questioned by anyone who investigates the evidence. He does not consider that the action of discarnate spirits is necessary to explain these innumerable and indubitable facts of experience, and is seeking for explanations which are in closer accord with the general canons of natural science. But, whether he is right in that restriction or not, that which is apparently established beyond all reasonable doubt is that the mind of man is open to sources of knowledge which cannot be operative through the ordinary channels of our so-called normal sense experience.

This whole movement of science is again compelling men to reconsider the position of the conscious mind of man in the physical universe. The system of nature is far more intricate, more varied in its constituent elements, more subtle in its total structure, and the mind of

man has a place in it more deep and more powerful than was pictured in the cosmic prison which was present to the imagination of men like Huxley and Spencer. The ancient saying *mens agitat molem* once more rises to view as the secret of the universe.

This mastery of nature by man which we call science, proceeding daily into hitherto unsuspected regions of reality, is constantly made subservient to the living interests of man, from bread and butter even to those loftiest values of his soul with which we must deal in later sections of this discussion. In fact the mind of man to-day consciously, triumphantly, holds the keys to the nature of the physical universe. It will brook no final mystery in that realm. With an audacity born of dazzling victories, prophetic of more, the human spirit insists on submitting every kind of fact or event in our whole world of experience to re-

lentless, patient, and as yet unbaffled investigation. And then, sooner or later, it brings them all into the service of man's personal and immortal nature.

It is no trifling and negligible fact, but central to the whole history of this process, this visible conquest of physical nature, that the same mind thus victorious has from the earliest days refused to believe that the death of the body ends the existence of the living, thinking self. The same mind at the same time and in the service of the same fundamental qualities of intelligent self-preservation and ever-widening prevision, has cherished along with its mastery of nature the invincible conviction of immortality. That conviction has, as we shall see, created every religion, all the noblest philosophies. It has given life to virtue, holiness to love, hope to bereavement, even sweetness to sorrow. It has worked in the evolution of man's entire individ-

ual and social experience, as a conviction native to and inherent in the mind itself, a category which is as necessary to a true conception of humanity as the uniformity of nature is an assumption necessary to the investigation of the outer universe. Tear out of the human mind the consciousness of its superiority over matter, over time and space, over death, and it lies all in ruins. This living universal conviction is no mere extraneous element without which that mind would perform all its functions in this natural universe normally and successfully. It belongs inherently to the consciousness which finds nature transparent to reason and plastic to the will and the purpose of man. In fact the belief in immortality is only an extension and deepening of that very consciousness. Man has refused to believe that the dead world can swallow up, destroy, abolish its interpreter and its lord. So at least has the whole moral

and religious history of man in substance proclaimed.

May we put the matter in still more daring form and point out as a matter of fact that only that mind which has been able to think of its own immortality has been able also to think in those ways which have produced the scientific control of Nature? That is to say, the idea of immortality is not a mere parallel to the other fundamental postulates of reason, any more than it is a mere accidental, dispensable freak of imagination.

We shall go even further, and make the assertion that the universal assumption, the hypothesis or belief that personal life continues beyond physical death, occupies the same normative place in the moral and spiritual life of man which the assumption or hypothesis of the uniformity of nature occupies in his dealings with the natural world. In a striking passage Professor Whitehead

has said, "The notion of the detailed providence of a rational personal God was one of the factors by which trust in the order of nature had been generated." [1] Since the notion of "a rational personal God" could only have arisen in a mind which conceived of a spiritual universe and its own permanent place therein, we may assume that there is even an inner and vital relation between the notion of immortality and that of the uniformity of nature.

The great hypothesis of the uniformity of nature has only gradually become clear as an abstract conception or theory, and has not yet been completely and finally described. But long before it was discovered by philosophy it had been at work as an inevitable and universal assumption of the mind of man. It was operative from the beginning of his intelligent relations with the environing

1. *Science and the Modern World*, p. 86.

world. It is not, therefore, as some say, a discovery of modern science. The very dawn of science depended upon it, and that because the life of intelligence rests on it primarily. It is a phase of that great category of causality which has from the first led man to seek out deliberately the connections between successive events and to direct their course so far as he can. As such it is inherent in the whole of that behavior which consists in fore-planning, conceiving of the results of action and assuming that the future will in substantial ways repeat the past. Wherever seed was planted, wherever dependence upon recurrent events underlay the dealings of man with nature, this hypothesis was already spontaneously at work in his mind. Certainly it was crudely and imperfectly applied. When events occurred which disappointed expectation or baffled explanation, they were often attributed to personal beings instead of to what

we call "natural law," and were treated as "miraculous," whatever that word means.

Yet let us remember two facts of importance relevant to this matter. If and so far as any events were thought of as "miraculous," they were so conceived just because they seemed to break in upon the uniformity of outward nature, which was already presupposed. If no uniformity had been expected, no "miracle," whatever that word means, could have been conceived. And further, it must be realized that when unseen or spiritual powers were named as the causes of physical or natural events, the mind of man was not thus introducing the irrational or destroying the order of the universe. It was simply an appeal from the impersonal to the personal. It was the effort to introduce order or uniformity where through lack of knowledge there seemed to be disorder. The idea of

the uniformity of nature as we call it was made to include the operation of personal causes, with personal purposes relating to the order of human experience. There was no discrimination such as modern science for its own convenience has drawn between the natural and the supernatural, no conception of a uniformity of nature which excluded the operation of non-physical causes among the physical facts. The naïve view prevailed everywhere that the universe is one, composed of interacting parts or elements which were at first conceived of as individual existences and only later through the long processes of thought apprehended as belonging to classes or kinds of existence which must be deeply distinguished from or even contrasted with each other. And the latest developments of the philosophy of science do but enrich and deepen that view, which seems somehow native to the human mind.

As a matter of fact the only real kind of miracle would be an event that has no cause at all, something that happens out of a nameless and empty nowhere. And that notion has never been present to the mind of man, however ignorant, however superstitious we may call him.[1] All of what we call miracles were efforts to explain events which did not seem to fall under the uniform action of one set of causes by referring their origin to the uniform nature of another set of causes, *viz.*, personal spirits. That is to say, the principle of the uniformity of nature and the principle of human immortality arose in the one mind of man and were both used together in the practical tasks of life. The one has been as essential to the processes of rational thought about the world of experience as the other.

1. But compare the quotation from Bertrand Russell, *infra*, p. 80, where such an irrational "miracle" is affirmed.

In a striking passage Professor Pratt has described this irrepressible spontaneity with which the human mind has assumed "the uninterrupted continuation of conscious life": "The child takes the continuity of life for granted. It is the fact of death that has to be taught. Hence the explicit idea of a future life comes to him as the most natural thing in the world, provided he is going to die at all." [1] In this of course the child merely reproduces the natural working of the mind of the race, as the doctrine of evolution would lead us to expect. The fact with which we are here concerned is that the spontaneous belief in immortality has wrought as deeply and powerfully in the making of human experience as the spontaneous belief in the uniformity of nature. The former like the latter has been the basis on which the reflective consciousness of man has reared the

1. *Op. cit.*, p. 225.

structure of all his human life — all man's moral and religious beliefs, ideals, and customs. Society as an ordered system has always rested upon it, since it is inherent in man's sense of freedom and responsibility. It is part of the equipment of that mind which can even raise the fundamental questions with which all philosophy is concerned, about the infinite, the eternal, the absolute. Only the undying can think of the eternal; only immortals can praise the measureless glory of "the good."

Both subjects, the two universal assumptions of the uniformity of nature and of the immortality of the human self, meet to-day in any thorough or scientific exploration of what we call personality. How the individual is built up or evolved is a problem which assumes on the one side that uniformity, or law, obtains in that process as in all "nature." On the other side, the psychological investigator

must face the fact that this individual man in actual history has used his belief in immortality as a revealing hypothesis in relation to a universe of absolute moral values.

Upon these two fundamental and majestic hypotheses, the uniformity of nature and the continuation of man's life after death, the whole vast course of human history has been based.

IV

The Fourth Fact

The belief in immortality has been essential to the discovery and pursuit of moral ideals and values, which constitute the peculiar substance of human experience.

The modern mind under the tutelage of natural science has been passing through a long period of confusion in which human nature has been at war with itself.

The preoccupation of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with the physical world seemed to render the higher interests of human nature, as such, less real, less substantial than the brute facts which can be numbered and measured and weighed. Hence a Huxley could speak of the cosmic process as if it stood over against and even at war with the feeble delusions and pretensions of man, as if the former did not include the latter, as if this human nature and human destiny were not the evolutionary consummation and rational justification of the whole history of our world. To-day there is a change of attitude which is the presage of a new era in human thought. In every direction we find evidence of a deeper and wiser insight into the vast drama which is unfolding on the surface of our planet.

The supreme inquiry is now concerned with the development of human

nature, and the heart of it lies in the question whether or not that nature contains within the life of each specimen of it, each personality, the promise and the potency of a divine and an eternal life. The whole sweep of science and of philosophy, the whole survey of the religions and the moralities of the world, the deeper meanings of even our interracial and international political problems, which are creating the community of the world, the effort to explore the meaning of every form of satisfaction from a passing pleasure to an ideal joy — all these are, through force of public education and the increase of universal intelligence, the subjects of deliberate interest and valuation everywhere. In no previous age was this possible.

It would seem therefore that a condition of life is coming into view in which the human race will, amid all its divergent interests and multiplied devotions,

be aware of some central and supreme relationship, and aware of some quality of life which is therein realized. Can we attempt to prefigure what that supreme relationship and that supreme quality of personal life will be? If that is beyond our present reach, at any rate we can assuredly get some partial glimpses of it by considering certain aspects of the history of human nature which are so vital as to be familiar to all thoughtful persons to-day.

For instance, let us begin with the fact that the development of man, apart from his acquisition through science of that truly vast power over nature to which we have already referred, has arisen from the twofold emphasis upon the value of personality and the value of society which has appeared in all his organized life, secular and religious. We need not enter here on the discussion of these values, as to which is the more impor-

tant, for Christianity has set before the world the conception that they are both infinite, and the infinite value of each depends upon the infinite value of the other. The main, prolonged, struggle of social and political theory and practice in recent centuries has manifestly been concerned with the relation of these two infinites, i. e., with both the rights and the duties of the individual man towards society and of society towards the individual man. What is called "the fight for liberty" has been concerned with the rights of the citizen, and all the governments of the world have been or are being transformed by that fact.

The next great achievement must be the discovery of a universal basis for the perfect ordering of the mutual relations of universally free personalities. For in respect of this perennial struggle much philosophic thinking has endeavored to do justice to the individual by describing

self-realization and self-expression as the essential features of the highest ethical life. But both in philosophy and in government it is becoming clear that the self, the individual, does not exist and cannot be realized except in vital, organic relations with others, with society as a whole. The individual has not merely his "rights" but his "duties." It is demanded that in his "self-expression" and "self-realization" he shall not merely take incidental account of, but find his very life in, the interests, the personal values, the rights, of his fellow men. For him these must become infinite in the sense that he may be expected even to give his life for them. And here it may be observed that Christianity has set into the moral consciousness of mankind the idea that supreme sacrifice of the individual shall find its full inspiration and justification, not in the principle of duty, essential as that must ever be, but in the

principle of love, which fills duty with enthusiasm and sacrifice with joy.[1]

Modern thought is deeply and passionately concerned with both aspects of human nature. Our daily newspapers abundantly prove that a whole nation, or even the whole civilized world, may be profoundly moved by the character, the history, the achievement, the disaster, of one human being. And modern governments are expected at least to profess that the humblest individual life is of measureless value. The poorest child must have an education. The poorest day-laborer must be protected in his individual rights. They are infinitely sacred not merely each to himself but to us all. The world increasingly gives its admiration and affection to men and women whose powerful personalities are

1. Cf. W. E. Hocking, *op. cit.* (chaps. 40 and 41); and of course J. R. Seeley's classic discussion in *Ecce Homo, passim.*

devoted not to self-aggrandisement but to the highest interests of their fellow men. A Napoleon, admired for his genius and energy, is condemned for the motives and spirit of his selfish life. A David Livingstone may die penniless and alone in the heart of Africa, and the world be thrilled by the glory of his purpose and the completeness of his sacrifice.

That which shines before the modern mind is the fact that the great order of human life rests upon the unselfish fulfilment of duty by the least and the greatest of citizens. He who would be greatest is he who serves, i. e., he who feels, if he does not clearly see, the supreme and infinite value of a perfected society, and sets himself as he fills his "station and its duties" to contribute his own force to reach that goal. One religion at any rate has asserted the infinite value of the race even for its Crea-

tor, and yet it seems to imply that the infinite value of the unified whole depends upon the infinite value of its component personal elements.

Now the inevitable question rises to all minds: What if death ends all this? Here is a world of human beings, teeming millions upon millions, through thousands of generations in the past and through thousands of generations to come. It is the supreme law of their being to look on the individual and the race as of infinite value. This is a law whose majesty and authority and penetrating glory pierces deeper into the conscience, the heart, the imagination of all, as the highest religion and morality spread over the world. The energy of all mankind is slowly but steadily, painfully but victoriously, working towards that double ideal, the moral perfection and hence the unmarred bliss of each human being and of the entire human race.

The most popular and effective argument for immortality to-day is based upon those facts, which are capable of many and varied forms of description. Expressed in brief it is said that "immortality is a postulate of a moral universe." This has been put in two striking sentences by Professor Sorley:

> The one purpose, which so far as I can see, justifies the field of havoc through which the world passes to better things, is the creation of those values which only free minds can realize. And if free minds, when perfected, are to pass away, even for absorption in God, then that value is lost; and we must ask again the question, with less confidence in the answer, whether the values which the world's history offers are worth the price that has been paid for them.[1]

That is to say, we must believe in the immortality of man because the values of a moral personality are those for which the whole process of nature (at

1. W. R. Sorley, *op. cit.*, p. 515.

least on our planet) has been created. The eternal conservation of supreme values is a principle or end which can only be realized in the conservation of those beings through whom alone those values could come into existence at all.

This line of argument has been eloquently and persuasively set forth by many eminent thinkers of our day. It is not our purpose to dispute its importance, its almost irresistible appeal. What we are concerned with here is the fact that this line of argument, however valid, could only have been constructed at a comparatively late date in the history of human experience. It does not represent the historical relation of the ideas of immortality and moral values. In fact it may be said almost to reverse that historical relation. For, whatever may have been the psychological conditions in which the idea of immortality was awakened in primitive times, it is

quite certain that they did not include a process of argumentation based upon the conservation of ideal ethical values. No doubt all the elements of man's reflective life have developed in coöperation with one another in the living unity of his personal nature. His fundamental instincts and primary beliefs or postulates did not emerge successively as separate interests and values, but in deep functional interaction with one another. Hence we must conceive that when the idea of survival of the individual was seen and accepted spontaneously, and as it were naturally, it was immediately related to all the problems, interests, and duties of personal and social activity. All the phenomena which can be described as "primitive" in anthropological science seem to confirm and illustrate this theory. There could have been no ancestor-worship without it. All the moral sanctions and social customs of the family, tribe, and

nation which relate to or rest upon the reality of invisible beings were therefore dependent upon it, even when they were not directly derived from it. In fact it was by means of this faith in the survival of death that a door was opened for the reflective mind of the race through which alone it could have passed to contemplate values that are absolute and eternal. No doubt there is in the human mind, as the greatest thinkers like a Plato or a Kant have triumphantly proved, a native capacity for directly apprehending the supreme reality, the eternal nature of the true, the beautiful, and the good. I am not arguing that those infinite values depend on the immortality of man. But what I do venture to urge for earnest consideration is the obvious fact that it was only as man exercised his consciousness of immortality amid all the other functions of his mentality that he was able to conceive

of these values and to throw the energies of his soul, even at the cost of great toil and perplexity and sorrow, into the age-long task of realizing them in personal moral achievement. What has been called "the human delight in permanence" [1] is undoubtedly inwoven with this instinctive longing for and belief in immortality; and both are elemental constituents in the whole of man's pursuit of ideals which stretch into the endless future and claim to be of the Divine Essence itself.

If this position be established, it follows that the maintenance of the moral ideals of the race is bound up with the maintenance of the belief in immortality. That is a doctrine against which a great deal of intemperate indignation can be expressed. It can be argued that many

1. The lectures in the late Joseph Cook's *Biology* (Houghton Mifflin Company) contain this and other illuminating phrases in a volume whose arguments are not all outworn.

estimable and noble men and women have denied the doctrine of immortality. They have maintained that moral values stand in their own right before the consciences of men and need not the support of man's immortality. If all men perish utterly, even if the physical universe at last swallow up all life, yet it will have been better to be good than bad, better to stand for honor and truth than for disloyalty and lies. This no doubt has a certain ring of nobility as well as sincerity, but as an argument it sadly misses the point. No one believes that a man who is the heir to a high-souled morality and has been trained to love virtue and to feel the beauty and the grace of a generous and honorable spirit will immediately collapse into ruffianism and sensuality, if he becomes convinced that death ends all, or at least that he must live on that hypothesis. The real fact is that no community has ever existed whose spirit-

ual and moral life did not rest in part upon the belief in a future life.

No doubt many individuals have tried to live without it, but their imagination, their moral insight, their life habits, have all been formed in the matrix of that racial faith. The practical test as to whether the belief that men perish like the animals will make beasts of them has, happily, never been carried out on a prolonged and extensive basis by a society whose members were unaffected in sentiment or purpose of life by those who do believe in a spiritual universe and the immortality of man. In such an argument individual attitudes count for absolutely nothing at all; and individual protests against the perennial linkage by all men, always, everywhere, of immortality and morality, persuade no one. There seems to be no escape from the fact, universally acknowledged though often dimly enough apprehended and

realized, that the infinite values of man's moral and spiritual nature could have been disclosed only to a mind that had learned to live, and to think, and to face death, as possessed of an endless life. In fact our thesis stands that the belief in immortality has been necessary to the exercise of man's spiritual aspirations and moral insight.

If then a man says "I have no wish for a future life," or "I do not feel that I have any such worth that the universe should keep me alive forever," the inherent facts of his actual life, the life of the race, laugh at him. The will to live which has preserved him thus far is implicitly the will to live forever; the true love which beats in his heart for all worthy objects is love forever; the very ideas of the infinite and the eternal, which somehow have arisen in the evolution of his mental life, do also somehow imply his own alliance with the infinite and the

eternal. Even Spinoza, learning to look at things *sub specie aeternitatis*, finds that he must somehow interpret his own relation to that objective, eternal system of reality; and somehow discover something in himself which is a permanent element in it. He cannot resist the *conatus in suo esse perseverare* (i. e., the urge to preserve his own existence). In the hour when a man sets duty over against self-love and self-interest, finding dimly but irresistibly present in himself another interest and another love, a life beyond this life has been stirring the depths of his consciousness. He acts as feeling the spell and power of a life, a form of personal existence, a universe of values above this temporal life, which he is willing to lay down for that higher good. He is living in the consciousness of immortality.

V

The Fifth Fact

The belief in the survival of the human soul is one of the bases of the religious life and thought of mankind, since it opened the door for the conception of other invisible spiritual beings, for the conception of the supreme God, and in general for the apprehension of the moral and spiritual nature of the universe.

This statement about the idea of immortality does not mean that there are not other elements in the reflective mind of man, other hypotheses, categories, postulates, instincts, insights, or whatever your philosophy may call them, which are necessary to the production of the religious life. What our thesis does emphasize at this point is the fact that the belief in immortality is also necessary to the birth of religion in the human soul. Unless the mind of man had possessed the capacity to conceive of its own survival of death and had possessed also the

deep impulse to affirm it, claim it, and believe in it, those other elements of mental life would have had no chance to operate, at least in the production of religion as it is.

Nor does our thesis mean that the idea of immortality was, as it were, born before the other elements of the religious consciousness became active. The fundamental elements of man's mental equipment are so interlaced and interdependent that we can only describe them as we find them acting together. They so act with ever-varying degrees of conscious prominence and power in the evolution of human experience. Thus it is true that in earliest times the belief in immortality, while it produced the phenomena of ancestor-worship and even of witchcraft, did not become directly or powerfully related with the idea of a supreme God which also existed and still exists among backward races. But on

the other hand, unless the belief in human survival had arisen, there does not seem to be any way in which the conception of other non-physical spirit-beings, including the supreme God, could have arisen.

An anonymous reviewer has made the following assertion, which seems to be supported by other writers:

> The religious belief in immortality is not historically continuous with primitive animism; it was not developed from it. This is the striking fact which emerges from a study of religion in Palestine, Greece and Rome. The religious belief grows out of a higher conception of the nature of God and from the experience of communion with Him.[1]

The interesting feature of this theory is that emphasis is laid on what is called "religious belief in immortality," which seems to imply that there is a belief in immortality which is not "religious" be-

1. *The Times Literary Supplement*, February 15, 1923, p. 97.

cause it does not "grow out of a higher conception of the nature of God." Now undoubtedly the Hebrews, the Greeks, and the Romans and all other peoples did have vague, undeveloped views concerning the shadowy world into which the dying pass. Undoubtedly also, as the history of the Hebrew religion most clearly illustrates the matter, there could be no high and worthy view of the destiny of man until men had entered into some degree of real communion with the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity. But we must not allow ourselves to narrow the issue in those terms. If ancestor-worship is a phase of religious life and experience, it follows that the belief in immortality which underlies it is a "religious belief." On the other hand, we must once more insist that there has been no evidence of the development of the idea of God, still less of "a higher conception of the nature of God," among

any people who did not already believe in the survival of the soul. The idea of the continuation of human life after death has operated in the quickening and directing of all those rational and spiritual energies through which communion with the eternal realities has been achieved.

Of the supreme contribution made by Christianity to human belief in immortality, to the human hunger for illumination of that mystery, only a few words need be said. And they are said in the name of our fundamental thesis. It is, we have argued, an inherent property of the human self-consciousness to believe in its own permanence. The belief has been universal and invincible. And yet it has survived against the terrors of death and the apparently unbroken silence of all the graves of all the generations. The "spear point of the challenge of Death," as Mr. Jacks has so eloquently described

it,[1] has daunted the courage of multitudes in all generations and left the others without any clear and confident hope. A Socrates could rally the waning spirit of the younger Greeks, saturated with scepticism and dismayed at the thought of a universal doom. But voices such as his were rare, and their echoes did not penetrate to the heart of death and slay *that*. The world still wondered and believed and feared.

But Christianity owes much of its glory and the spell it casts upon the soul of man because it has addressed itself directly to the human consciousness of immortality. Wherever its message goes, it assumes that so far as their own confessions and modes of life are concerned men have been living as "having no hope and without God in the world." It has taught that the belief in immortality can only become an inspiring hope when it

1. *Op. cit.*, p. 24.

has become religious in the fullest sense, in fact when communion with God has become the familiar atmosphere of the human spirit.

And this lofty level of life was put within reach of mankind, so the great story goes, when one Consciousness moved among men which even on the verges of death looked out beyond the confines of Palestine and said, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Those are the most daring, the proudest, perhaps the most creative words ever addressed to the warring faith and doubt, the mingled hopes and fears of humankind. They brought a shadowed life and a vague immortality into the light.

Summary and Conclusion

The temptation arises, as we survey the course of our discussion, to break away into a definite, old-fashioned argument for immortality, but the special task

which has been attempted in the defence of our fundamental thesis must not be deserted. It must not be confused with arguments from Evolution, or from Theism, or from the structure of the soul, or from the absoluteness of moral values and their relation to the permanence of personality. To others these labors have belonged. To us, here to-day, it is enough if we have shown that the history of man has been based upon the postulate of immortality — as one essential element of his consciousness. If that is proved, those other familiar forms of argument will receive fresh light and perhaps a restatement of more convincing power.

There is only one way of proving that any element of thought or emotion is native and essential to human nature, and that is to show that it has everywhere, in all men, from the beginning of rational life, occupied an essential and

vital place in the "on-go" of his experience. When that is proved, then the usage of language allows or even compels us to say that it belongs to, that it is inevitable for, the human consciousness to think or to feel in this way or in that. This is what has been attempted in this lecture.

If the five theses which have been stated as facts, and only partially defended and illustrated, can stand against attack, then when we gather them up as phases in the unified process of man's mental life we have proved our Fundamental Thesis that the idea of and the belief in his survival of death is an original, inherent, and indefeasible part of the consciousness of man. It is no mere incidental notion whose presence or absence makes no difference to the other operations of his mind. It is no mere future extension of life which is thus believed in, to deny or to ignore which would leave

all his powers free within the limits of this earthly life to discover truth, or pursue ideals, or measure moral values as mankind has done these things. If my theses are true, then the terrific conclusion is inescapable, that the universal loss of belief in immortality, the universal spread of the conviction that death does end all, would literally shatter man's mind. No part of his historic consciousness would then operate as it actually has done. If he would be true to the facts, he would then have to learn to wish not to live, to crush the instinct of self-preservation except within the animal limits. It would be his duty to do so. He must revise his whole racial habit of living for the future. He must laboriously translate all its vistas and inspiring prospects into lower terms, the terms of a life that is only of the earth, of a future in which the individual has no stake. He would have to criticize his

sorrow at bereavement with cold dislike and place it in relation to a dead universe. He would have to reconstruct all his estimates of his relation to that physical universe. The very meaning of knowledge, of history, of progress, would have to be restricted to terms which we cannot describe without doing violence to the very process of thought, to our actual thinking about science and history and progress. All these were born and are still growing in the life of a race which believes itself immortal; they spring from a mind which never has lived without that belief. Their growth has always been coincident with an effort to apprehend more fully the content of the life beyond death. And the withering of faith has always been concurrent with the withering of the higher mental processes of man.

Without this faith man would never have been able to conceive of moral and

aesthetic values. There is an inner connection between the immortality of personal beings and the eternity of these infinite values which, if we cannot logically prove it, yet has actually made possible the moral and religious history of mankind.

But someone will say that it is absurd to speak of our being now conscious of a future life. And I admit that we are not conscious of it in the same sense as we are conscious of our present action in our present environment from moment to moment. But it is our present living consciousness that enables us to think of the environment of our lives as we plan our movements to-morrow, or next summer. It is the whole rich structure and varied functions of our total conscious mentality which enable us to live thus ever as affirming the permanence of our life and so envisaging the future as to give meaning and value to the present.

May I take a familiar illustration from the attitude of a young student towards his place in college? Here is one for whom college is a supreme opportunity for irresponsible pleasure. Four years seem long, and he will make the most of them. It may be sports and cards and movies and chatter — endless chatter — that promise a good time. For him the prospect outside of college is nothing, he will ignore it, forget it, leave it as a mystery that lies beyond the death of graduation. He tries to be aware only of the present. Another man knows something of what the world beyond graduation means or will mean to him. He sees it reflected in the achievement of others, perhaps in his family traditions; he sees his present personal task in the light of that future, beyond the incident, not the death, of graduation. As a student he works in the consciousness of the life to come.

So the wise of all generations have sought to spend their years in the consciousness of this life to come. For the universal mind of man has always peered through the mystery of death to that unknown future, in whose reality it has believed with indomitable courage, with the inflexible will of a rational being to live on because it can conceive the ideal of endless life. Somehow it seems to be written into the ultimate nature of things that the being which can form the idea of permanence must be permanent; otherwise by what philosophy of evolution can you explain the emergence on the surface of our planet of a regal mind which can explore and rule the earth in name of its own immortality, which yet is doomed to perish as a thing of nought? Mr. Bertrand Russell has put the case with his usual clarity and also with a touch of sentimental rhetoric in a passage which is quoted by Sir Oliver

Lodge.[1] He insists that certain things are so "nearly certain, that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand." Among these are the statements "that man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his hopes and fears, his loves and beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms." Of course he is doomed to extinction. "Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built." Philosophically his conclusion is drawn from a conception which is in its very nature unscientific, *viz.*, the "accidental collocations of atoms." There the irrational is treated as the source of all man's life; presumably it is the source of Mr. Russell's discovery of it. I cite his words, however, not for repartee but to call

1. *Why I Believe in Immortality*, pp. 7–8.

attention to the most significant statement, that we human beings, in the light of the real, accidental universe, must rear our house of life "on the firm foundation of unyielding despair." Why should man "despair," confronting the destiny of death for which an ordered universe has prepared him, or which it has prepared for him, unless he was made to expect something else? And why "*unyielding*" in his despair? The very phrase confirms the Thesis of this lecture that all man's life has been hitherto based upon the belief in immortality, and that being man he could not think otherwise. Henceforth if he tear that out of his consciousness, — nay he cannot tear it out, — it will still live, it will haunt him so that to maintain the truth which is his despair he must fight with an energy and conviction that must be "unyielding" forever, till the last man meets the doom of all. He will die still "unyielding," be-

cause in him is a nature that fights against that despair.

If a Thomas Hardy looking at life's experience infers that the energy which produces all is non-moral, neutral towards all the sorrow or joy, triumph or defeat, of mankind, he must be asked to reconsider the history of human experience in the light of his own moral indignation, which has its own real place in the universe. As Dr. Tsanoff has well put it in his striking discussion of the problem of evil, "The extreme pessimist must ask 'How could such a world include the disdain of it, to wit, pessimistic philosophy?' This is the pessimist's problem of good." [1] And further, our stern judge of the Immortals, as he sardonically calls them, must reconsider the varied human efforts which have always been bravely made to counteract the

1. Professor R. A. Tsanoff, Ph.D., *The Problem of Evil* (The Rice Institute, 1928), p. 2.

evils of life. These efforts are themselves in the process he condemns, and are as truly to be considered as clues to the Origin of all as the evils against which they are directed. He must also reconsider the conviction of the race that "behind the veil" is the justification even for the evils of this life, in the light of an eternal transvaluation of all values. Again we are in the presence of that great fact, the greatest, the highest, the most beautiful element in the actual universe of experience, the invincible faith of mankind that an eternal life is the source of life, and infinite goodness is the ground of man's undying expectation of the conquest of death. As Archbishop Temple has well expressed it, "The Religious beliefs and practices of mankind, and the experiences which both originate them and issue from them, are part of the data, and cannot be ignored without committal

of the gravest of all intellectual crimes — neglect of the facts." [1]

On the other side, let me quote the final *confessio fidei* of that splendid personality, the late Lord Haldane: "Death belongs to what falls outside the inmost nature of spirit. We do not pass out of an independently subsisting world with it; that world on the contrary passes from us, and we can contemplate it as so passing, and thereby we are lifted above the event." There speaks not a lonely and exalted spirit. There speaks the consciousness of the race. Nor does your own distinguished thinker, Professor Hocking of Harvard University, speak only for himself, but again for the race when he says, "One who loves life at all is forever becoming more deeply involved in it: and the self-conscious lover

1. *Essays in Christian Politics and Kindred Subjects*, p. 83.

of life cannot otherwise than will his own continuous existence." [1]

These most significant utterances are for me significant not because they attempt to prove immortality, but because they rise above mere argument, and in name of human nature itself triumphantly assert it. They reveal the idea and the belief as seated in and working at the fontal sources of our life where man wills "his own continuous existence," where he sees death "falling outside" the real centre of his being. Long ages before the first philosophies arose, in the dim beginnings of our human story, the very same mental processes were at work which at last reached their full measure of deliberate operation in the highest forms of science and philosophy. The pioneers, the masters of the search for truth, have been able to deal with the problem of immortality because the

1. *Op. cit.*, p. 373.

power to conceive of it and the passion to possess it were inherent in the mind of the race; and the consciousness of man's immortality has been and is as necessary to his art and his science, his virtues and his vices, his fears and his hopes, as any other endowment of his mind or impulse of his heart.

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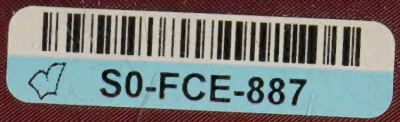
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